

On-Site Inventory Project

Jayne's Expectorant

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Since our last post, we have inventoried almost an additional 1,000 objects. They have ranged from construction tools to 19th-century typewriters. Needless to say, we have come across some things we are familiar with as well as some things that completely boggle our minds. For example, in the midst of soda and industrial cleaning bottles, we came across a large bottle labeled *Jayne's Expectorant*. What is *Jayne's Expectorant*, you might ask? We were curious as well.

If you believe the label, *Jayne's Expectorant* can cure a variety of respiratory problems ranging from a cough to lung disease. The bottle assures that the medicine is good for both mother and child, and is "Always Sure." And if you're happy with the *Expectorant*, the label (humorously, in our opinion) advertises another one of Jayne's products: *Tonic Vermifuge*, a medicine that will "Surely Expel Worms" from your body.

But readers beware. In our further research, we discovered the shocking truth about *Expectorant's* ingredients. The contents are poisonous, literally! According to Donald Yates' article in the Winter 2005 edition of the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors' *Bottles and Extras*, Jayne's Expectorant contained "tartar emetic, spirits of camphor, ipecac, opium, lobelia, tolu balsam, digitalis and squill," not necessarily things you want to ingest. For example, emetics naturally induce vomiting. And if that isn't enough to cause you to pause, camphor is currently only used externally, as it is poisonous; digitalis of the onion family is a plant that is more commonly known as Deadmen's Bells because of its ability to cause cardiac arrest.



Bottle from Renton History Museum's collection.



We pulled out this bottle because it really caused us to think about how far medical research has come in the past century. Many other objects in the collection have also made us wonder at the speed of innovation in our world. We have moved from typewriters to iPads, sliding rulers have been replaced by multi-function calculators, and picture boxes to digital cameras. We hope you've enjoyed this venture into the past of medicine and thought a little bit about life "back in the day." With 1,300 objects down, and many more to go, we look forward to sharing our next find with you. Have a great day!

Example of another label from *Jayne's Expectorant* from *Bottles and Extras*.

Renton History Museum